

THE GLOBE THEATRE

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From 1599 onward, Shakespeare's plays were usually performed at the Globe, a huge, open-air circular theatre in Southwark in London. The theatre could hold 3000 people, and there were two performances a day. Along with other members of his theatre company, the Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare owned a share in the Globe and made a lot of money from it.

Like many theatres at the time, the Globe was a wooden circle built of oak beams and with no roof over the middle. The only lighting was daylight, so performances were put on in the afternoons. The stage, known as an apron stage, stuck out into the middle of the yard. It was covered by a thatched roof which helped to keep the players dry and was positioned so the sun didn't shine in the actors' eyes. Two wooden pillars supported the roof and were painted to look like marble. The ceiling over the stage was called the "shadow" or "heavens." It was painted with sun, moon, and stars. Behind the stage there was a backstage area where the actors got changed. There was not much scenery on the stage. Props and elaborate costumes were used instead. The stage was 5 feet high, so people couldn't jump onto it.

The members of the audience who stood in the yard around the stage were known as groundlings. They weren't sheltered from the rain, but they were nearest to the action on the stage. There were three levels of covered galleries around the yard. It cost more to sit here and an extra penny if you wanted a cushion.